

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 INSE-00 SCA-01 VO-03 L-03 PA-01 PRS-01

USIE-00 SS-15 NSC-05 SSO-00 NSCE-00 EB-07 COME-00

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O 232255Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6365

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EO 11652: NA

TAGS: PFOR PBOR MX US

SUBJECT: INS AIR REPATRIATION: FONSEC ANXIETIES

REF MEXICO 9414

1. AMB GONZALEZ DE LEON TELEPHONED DCM AFTERNOON JULY 22 TO EXPRESS HIS VERY SERIOUS MISGIVING OVER TIJUANA-LEON "VOLUNTARY DEPARTURE" FLIGHTS, ABOUT WHICH HE HAD OBVIOUSLY KNOWN PRACTICALLY NOTHING UP TO DATE, BUT WHICH RECEIVING LURID PRESS COVERAGE (REPORTED SEPTEL) HE SAID THAT, IN PUBLIC MIND AS WELL AS AMONG GOM OFFICIALS TO SOME EXTENT, IT APPEARED THAT LEON FLIGHTS AMOUNTED TO "EVASION" OF U.S. COMMITMENTS WITH RESPECT TO EXPERIMENTAL AIR REPATRIATION PROGRAM AND HE PREDICTS SPATE OF UNFAVORABLE EDITORIALS IN MEXICO PRESS AS CONSEQUENCE.

2. MOREOVER, GONZALEZ DE LEON SAID, LEON FLIGHTS SEEMED TO HIM "HIGHLY IRREGULAR" AT BEST, IN AS MUCH AS THEY SEEMED TO HAVE NO BASIS IN FORMAL UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN USG AND GOM AND CERTAINLY APPEARED TO BE SOMEWHAT LESS THAN "VOLUNTARY." HE ADDED FOREIGN SECRETARY GARCIA ROBLES WAS PERSONALLY "VERY CONCERNED" ABOUT CHARACTER OF THESE FLIGHTS, ADDING THAT HE (GONZALEZ) WOULD NOT BE SURPRISED IF FONSEC WERE TO ORDER THEM STOPPED.

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3. DCM EXPLAINED, IN AS MUCH DETAIL AS IS AVAILABLE TO US, THE HISTORY AND NATURE OF TIJUANA-LEON FLIGHTS NOTING THAT THEY SEEMED TO HAVE BEEN QUIETLY SUCCESSFUL AND NON-CONTROVERSIAL FOR MANY MONTHS. HE POINTED OUT THAT, UNFORTUNATELY, THE EXISTENCE OF THE OLDER PROGRAM HAD NOT BEEN TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT (OR PERHAPS EVEN THOUGHT OF) WHEN ARRANGMENTS WERE MADE FOR CURRENT PROGRAM. HE AGREED NEVERTHELESS WITH GONZALEZ DE LEON THAT COINCIDENCE OF THESE TWO PROGRAMS WAS UNFORTUNATE AND THAT CONFUSION IN PUBLIC MINDS WAS UNDERSTANDABLE.

4. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH OUR EXPLANATIONS AND EXPRESSIONS OF CONCERN HAD CALMING EFFECT ON GONZALEZ DE LEON, WE CANNOT AGREE MORE WITH HIM AT UNFORTUNATE EFFECT OF ATTEMPTING TO CONTINUE "VOLUNTARY DEPARTURE" AIR LIFT FROM TIJUANA WHILE UNDERTAKING, WITH CONSIDERABLE FAN-FARE, EXPERIMENTAL REPATRIATION PROGRAM. REPEATING WHAT DCM HAS STRESSED TO ARA/MEX, IT SEEMS TO US THAT PRESENT CONFUSION AND ADVERSE PUBLIC RELATIONS FALL-OUT CANNOT BE OVERCOME UNLESS TIJUANA-LEON FLIGHTS ARE SUSPENDED FOR DURATION OF EXPERIMENTAL PROGRAM, OR, AT A MINIMUM, COMPLETELY, INTEGRATED INTO THAT PROGRAM. UNLESS SUCH STEPS ARE TAKEN, IT WOULD NOT SURPRISE US IF FONSEC WERE IN FACT TO ORDER THOSE FLIGHTS STOPPED -- AND PERHAPS EVEN "VOLUNTARY" TRAINLIFT AND BUS LIFTS AS WELL, WHICH WE UNDERSTAND CONTINUE TO OPERATE ON SIMILARLY INFORMAL BASIS FROM BORDER.

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